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The
**WINNIEBERR
EDWARDS**

by JOSEPH EDWARDS



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The HENNEKER DIAMONDS



*I threw myself on the flat rock and studied the
appearance of the newcomers*

The
HENNEKER DIAMONDS

*Based upon an episode in Captain
Marryat's famous story—
The Little Savage.*

Done for

STORY-TELLER'S HOUSE

By

JOSEPH BERNARD

II

Drawings by

LENARD HOLMES



THOMAS S. ROCKWELL COMPANY
CHICAGO

1930

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CHAPTER I

LIFE ON OUR ISLAND

MY HISTORY is a curious one, for I believe I am the first boy ever left alone and friendless on an uninhabited island.

I guess I was about five years old at the time I first remember clearly what passed. I was with a man on a desolate island and we often walked along the shore of the sea. This was rocky and hard to climb, and the man used to drag me over the worst places. He was very unkind to me, which was strange, for I was the only companion he had. He was of a gloomy turn of mind and would squat in the corner of our cabin and not speak for hours. Or he would remain the whole day looking out at the sea, as if watching for something, but what I never could tell. For if I spoke he would not reply, and if near to him I was sure to receive a cuff or a heavy blow.

I state here what I learned from him about our being left alone on this deserted spot. I gained the information when he was lying sick, and that only by refusing to wait on him or bring him food and water. He said he would make me smart for it when he got well again, but I did not care. For I

was then growing strong while he became weaker every day. And I had no love for him, because he had never shown me any.

He told me that about twelve years before an English ship had been wrecked near the island, that seven men and one woman had been saved, and all the other people drowned. I had been born on the island, but by the time I was two years old everybody but the two of us had died and been buried. More he would not tell me, but he did talk sometimes in his sleep, and I used to lie awake and listen—not at first, but when I grew older. Again and again he would cry out in his sleep: “God be merciful to me for my heavy sins!”

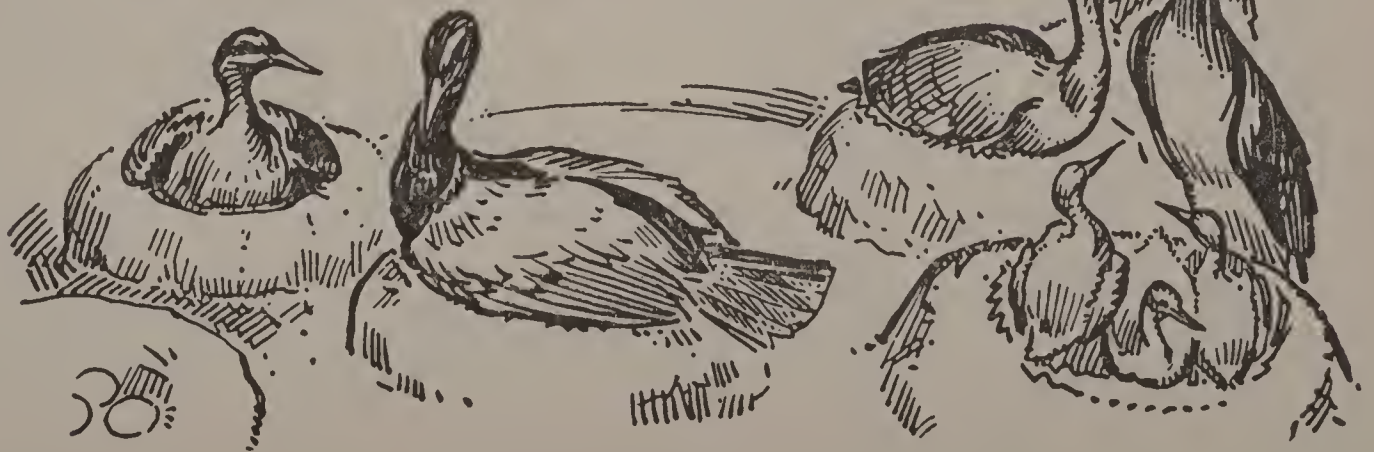
I will now describe the island and the way in which we lived. The island was small, perhaps not three miles round. It was of rock and there was no landing place, for the sea washed its steep sides with deep water. Our cabin was built of ship-plank and timber from the wreck, under the shelter of a cliff. Before it was a flat of thirty yards square, and from the cliff trickled down a rill of water that fell into a hole dug to collect it and then found its way over the flat to the rocks beneath. The cabin was large but not too much so, as we had to store in it our provisions for many months. Our bed-places were made soft with the feathers of sea-birds which resorted to the island. Furniture there was none ex-

cept three old axes blunted with long use, a tin pannikin, mess-kid or tub such as sailors use for their food, some rude vessels to hold water cut out of wood and a rough bedstead made of driftwood.

The climate was warm all the year round, and there seldom was a fall of rain. At a certain period of the year numberless birds came to the island to breed on a level spot divided from our cabin by a deep ravine. Here the birds would sit on their eggs, not four inches apart from each other, and the whole surface of twenty acres would be completely covered with them. There they would remain from the time of the laying of the eggs until the young ones were able to leave their nests and fly away with them.

This was our harvest time. We would rob the old birds of their young, collecting hundreds every day and bearing them across the ravine to the platform in front of our cabin, where we skinned them, split them and hung them to dry in the sun. Then they were packed up in a corner of the cabin for use during the year. Eggs were also taken in large quantities at the time the sea-birds first made their nests. The air of the island was so pure that they did not spoil.

We got also as many fish as we wanted. Our lines were made of the leg sinews of the man-of-war birds, many of them knotted together to be long enough to reach over the rocks. We fixed our bait over a



strong fish-bone that was fastened to the line by the middle and answered our purpose as well as the best hook. Our clothing, such as it was, we got from the birds. These we skinned with their feathers on, and sewed the skins together with sinews and a fish-bone by way of a needle. The climate was so fine we did not suffer from cold at any season of the year.

We had no employment of any kind. There was a book, and I asked what it was for and what it was, but I got no answer. It stayed on its shelf, for if I only looked at it I was ordered away. And at last it filled me with a sort of fear, as if it were a kind of strange animal.



CHAPTER II

I DISCOVER A HIDING PLACE

MY MASTER, as I called him, was a short square-built man. His hair was of a dark color and fell down his back in thick clusters. His beard was two feet long and bushy—indeed, he was covered with hair wherever his person was exposed. He was very strong, but except when we collected birds or went up the ravine to bring down faggots of wood for a fire he seldom moved out of the cabin, unless it was to bathe. Every morning almost we went down to swim in a pool that was secure from sharks because it was separated from the sea by a low ridge of rocks. When I was seven or eight years old I could swim like a fish.

Thus was my life passed away. My duties were trifling, I had little or nothing to employ myself about, for I had no means of doing anything. I seldom heard the sound of a human voice, and became as tongue-tied as my companion. I was little better than a beast of the field that lies down on the pasture after it is filled. There was one great source of interest, however, which was to listen to the sleeping talk of my companion. He kept muttering about



"that woman" and about something he had hidden away. One night when the moon was shining bright, he sat up in his bed and throwing aside the feathers on which he had been lying scratched the mold away below them and lifted up a piece of board. After a minute he replaced everything and lay down again. He evidently was sleeping during the whole time. Here at last was something to feed my thoughts with. I had heard him say in his sleep that he had hidden something—this must be the hiding place.

One day as I looked to seaward I saw a large white object on the water. "Look, master," I said, pointing to it.

"A ship, a ship!" cried my companion.

He rushed into the cabin to strike a light, which he obtained by a piece of iron and flint, with some fine, dry moss for tinder. He soon came out with his hands full of smoking tinder and putting it under a pile of wood was busy blowing it into a flame. The wood was quickly set fire to, and the smoke ascended several feet into the air. "They'll see that," he said.

I pointed to the horizon where some small clouds were rising up which as I knew from experience were a sign of a short but violent gale. I watched the squall advancing with a furious speed. The men on board the ship had not noticed it until it



was too late, for in another moment almost I saw the vessel bowed down to the fury of the gale, and after that the mist was so great that I could not see her any more. For two hours the tornado lasted without interruption. Speak we could not because of the force of the wind and the deluge of water which descended. We shut our eyes against the lightning and held our fingers to our ears to deaden the awful noise of the thunder. When the sky had cleared a little, a flash of lightning revealed the ship to me—dismasted, rolling in the breakers, bearing down upon the high rocks.

“I will go and see what goes on,” I said.

“Go,” said my companion, “and share the fate of the dying men.”



CHAPTER III

MY MASTER IS BLINDED

BEFORE I had gone fifty paces, another flash of lightning was followed by a loud shriek.

I heard my companion call me to come back. I obeyed him, and found him lying upon his bed-place without motion or noise. "What is the matter, master?" said I.

"I am blind," he replied. "The lightning has burned out my eyes. All is dark as night, and I care not if I die tomorrow."

And then he turned towards me and I saw there was no light in his eyes. "Bring me water, do you hear?" he cried angrily, and made as if to strike me one of his terrible blows.

Perhaps I should observe here that my feelings toward this man were those of positive dislike, if not hatred. I had never had one kind word or deed from him. Harsh and unfeeling toward me, only suffering me about him because I saved him trouble and he needed some living thing for company—his feelings for me had become mine for him. I was now, I suppose, twelve or thirteen years old—strong and active. More than once I had felt inclined to

measure my strength against his. Irritated at his angry language, I therefore replied:

“Go for the water yourself.”

Having said this, I walked out of the cabin and left him. He cried out, “Don’t leave me,” but I heeded him not and sat down at the edge of the flat ledge of the rock before the cabin. Looking at the white dancing waves and deep in my own thoughts, I considered a long while how I should behave towards him. I did not wish him to die, as I knew he must if I left him. He could not get water from the rill without a great chance of falling over the cliff. In fact, I was now fully aware of his helpless state. To prove it to myself, I rose and shut my own eyes and tried if I could venture to move on such dangerous ground—and I felt sure that I could not.

He was then in my power. He could do nothing. He must trust to me for almost everything. I had said, let what would follow, I would be master and he boy, but that could not be, as I must still wait upon him or he would die. At last the thought came suddenly upon me: I will be master nevertheless, for now he shall answer me all my questions, tell me all he knows, or he will starve. He is in my power. Having arranged my plans, I returned to the cabin and said to him:

“I will be kind to you and not leave you to starve, if you will do what I ask.”

"And what is that?" he replied.

"Answer every question I put to you."

"Well," he said slowly, "it is a judgment upon me, and I must agree. I will do as you wish."

"Well then, to begin," I said, "what is your name?"

He groaned, ground his teeth, and then said, "Edward Jackson."

"And my name?" I asked.

"Will you bring me some water for my eyes?" he said. "They burn most terribly."

"Not unless you tell me my name."

"Frank Henneker—and curses on it."

I went out, filled a kid, and put it by his side. "There is the water, Jackson. If you want anything, call me. I shall be outside."

He should talk now as much as I pleased, for I was the master. I had been treated as a slave, and was now fully prepared to play the tyrant. Mercy and compassion I knew not. I had never seen them called forth, and I felt them not. I sat down on the flat rock for some time, and then it occurred to me that I would turn the course of the water which fell into the hole at the edge of the cliff; so that if he crawled there he would not be able to obtain any. I did so and emptied the hole. The water was now only to be obtained by climbing up, and it was out of his power to get a drop.

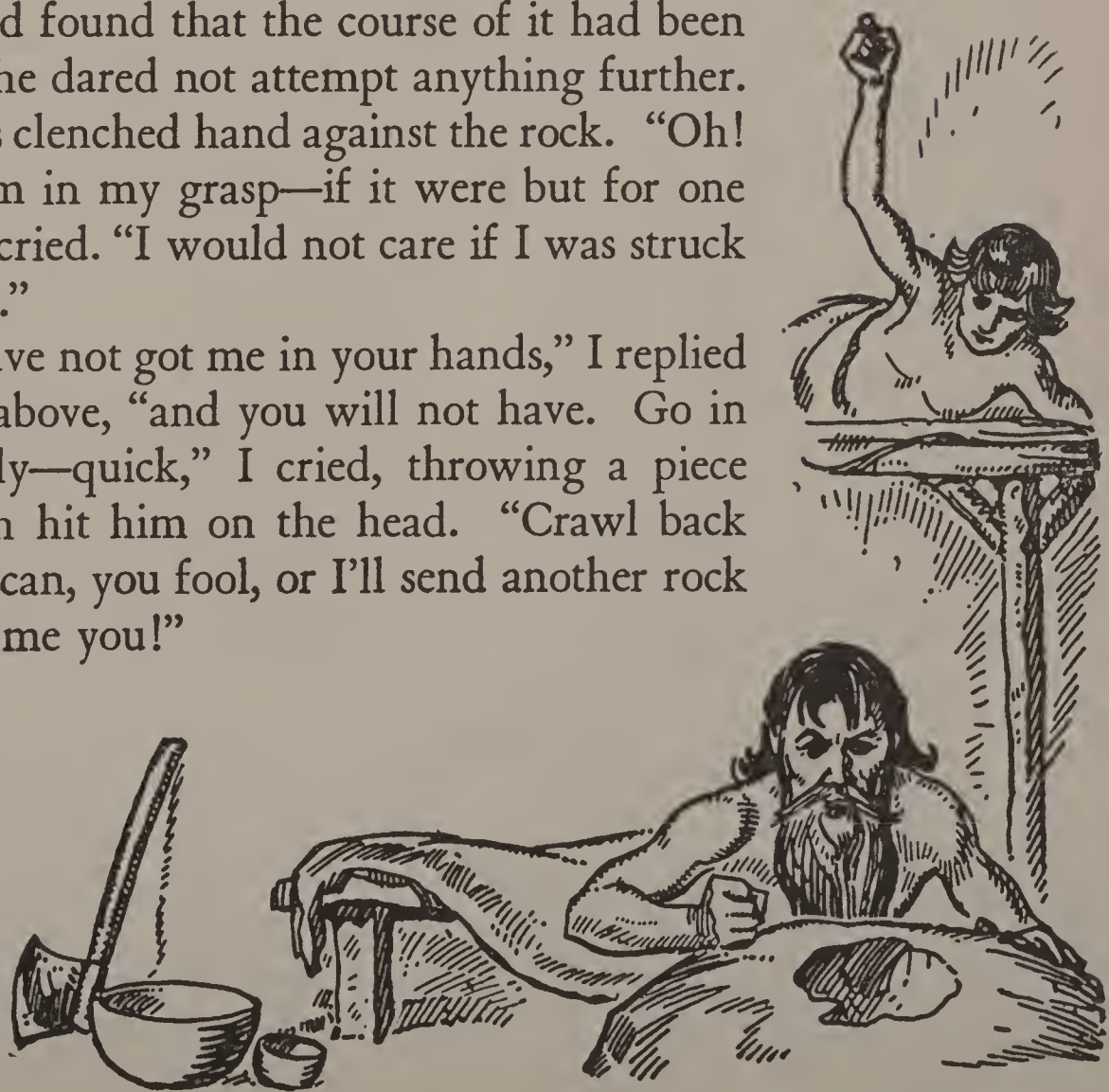
I now decided I would have a full and particular

account of how the vessel had been wrecked on the island, and who were my father and mother—when I was aroused by Jackson (as I shall in future call him) fairly screaming my name. I would not answer him.

After a moment I saw that he crawled out of his bed-place, and feeling by the sides of the cabin contrived on his hands and knees to crawl in the direction of the hole into which the water had previously been received. I smiled at what I knew would be his disappointment when he arrived there. He did so at last: put his hand down to feel the edge of the hole, and then down into it to feel for the water. When he found there was none, he cursed bitterly, and I laughed at his vexation.

He then felt all the way down where the water had fallen, and found that the course of it had been stopped, and he dared not attempt anything further. He dashed his clenched hand against the rock. "Oh! that I had him in my grasp—if it were but for one moment," he cried. "I would not care if I was struck dead the next."

"But you have not got me in your hands," I replied to him from above, "and you will not have. Go in to bed directly—quick," I cried, throwing a piece of rock which hit him on the head. "Crawl back as fast as you can, you fool, or I'll send another rock at you. I'll tame you!"

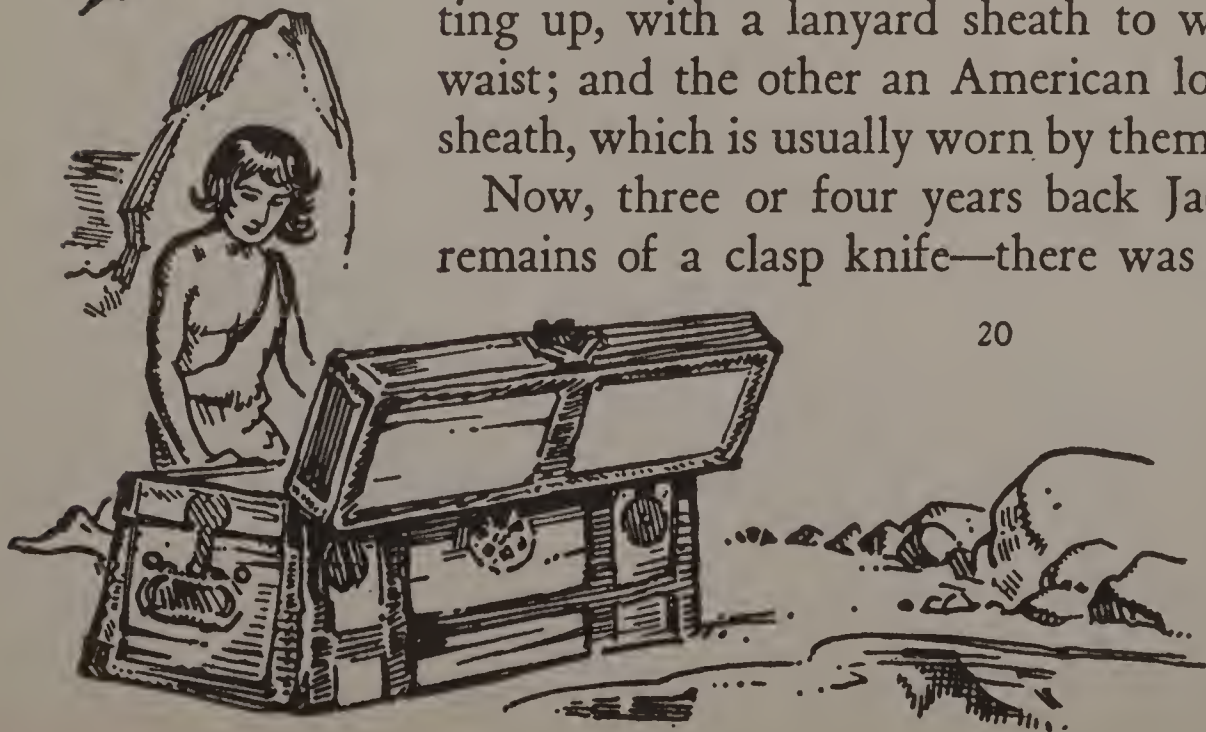


CHAPTER IV.

I BECOME MASTER

I THEN went down to the water's edge to see if I could find anything from the wreck, for the water was smooth and no longer washed over the edge of the island. Except fragments of wood, I saw nothing until I arrived at the pool where we were accustomed to bathe. There I found the sea had thrown into the pool two articles—one was a cask of the size of a puncheon, and the other was a seaman's chest. The cask was firm in the sand and I could not move it. The chest was floating. I hauled it up on the rocks without difficulty and proceeded to open it with a big stone. I found in it a quantity of seaman's clothes, two new tin pannikins that would hold water, three empty wine bottles, a hammer, a chisel, a gimlet, and some other tools, also three or four fishing lines many fathoms long. But what pleased me most were two knives, one shutting up, with a lanyard sheath to wear round the waist; and the other an American long knife, in a sheath, which is usually worn by them in the belt.

Now, three or four years back Jackson had the remains of a clasp knife—there was about an inch



of the blade remaining—and this he valued very much. Indeed, miserable as the article was, in our destitute state it was invaluable.

This knife he had laid on the rock when fishing, and it had been dragged into the sea as his line ran out; and he was for many days inconsolable for its loss. We had used it for cutting open the birds when we skinned them, and since the loss of it we had had hard work to get the skins off. I therefore well knew what these knives were worth.

The remainder of the articles in the chest, which was quite full, I laid upon the rocks to dry, with the clothes. Of most of them I did not know the use, and so did not prize them at the time—it was not until afterwards that I learned their value. Among these articles were two books.

I felt the knives, the blades were sharp. I put the lanyard of the clasp knife round my neck. The sheath knife, which was a formidable weapon, I made fast round my waist with a piece cut from the fishing lines. I then turned my steps to the cabin, as night was coming on, though the moon was high in the heavens and shining brightly. Jackson heard me come in and asked me in a quiet tone if I would bring some water to his bed-place.

“No, I will not,” I said, “because of what you said you would do if you got me in your power. I’ll tame you,” I cried. “I’m master now.”

"That is no reason you should not let me have some water," he replied. "Did I ever prevent you from having water?"

"What trouble would you take for me if I were blind?" I asked. "You would leave me to die. You only let me live to work for you, and you beat me cruelly all the time."

"Be it so," Jackson replied, calmly. "I shall not want water long."

There was a quietness about Jackson that made me suspect him. The result was that when I turned in that night I remained awake, thinking of what had passed. Towards morning I heard him move—he crept very softly out of his bed-place toward me, listening, and advancing on his knees not more than a foot every ten seconds.

"You want me in your grasp," thought I, "all right, come on!" And I drew my American knife from its sheath without noise and awaited his approach, smiling at the surprise he would meet with.

I allowed him to come right up to me. He felt the side of my bed and then passed his right hand over to seize me. I caught this hand with my left and, passing the knife across his wrist, began to divide it from his arm. He gave a shriek of surprise and pain and fell back.

"He has a knife!" he exclaimed with surprise, holding his partly severed wrist with the other hand.



*He felt the side of my bed and passed his right
hand over to seize me*

"Yes, he has a knife," I mocked, "and you see that he knows how to use it. Will you come again—or will you believe I am master?"

"If you have any mercy, kill me at once," he said, as he sat up in the moonlight in the center of the floor of the cabin.

"Mercy," I said, "what is that? I never heard of it."

"Alas, no," he said, "I never showed you any. Lord forgive me, it's a judgment on me for my sins. First my eyes, and now my right hand useless. What next, O Lord of heaven?"

"Why, your other hand next," I said, "if you try it again."

Jackson made no reply. He tried to crawl back to his bed, but faint with loss of blood he dropped senseless on the floor. Satisfied that he would make no more attempts on me, I fell fast asleep. In about two hours I awoke and saw him lying on the floor where he had fallen the night before. He lay in a pool of blood—was he asleep or was he dead? I felt him, and he was quite warm. It was a ghastly cut on his wrist, and I thought, if he is dead he will never tell me what I want to know. I remembered he bound up cuts to stop the blood. So I took some feathers from the bed and put a handful on the wound. After I had done this, I bound up his wrist with a piece of fishing line I had taken to secure the sheath knife round my waist, and then I went for

some water. I poured some down his throat. This revived him, and he opened his eyes.

"Give me some more water," he said, faintly.

I did so, for I did not wish to kill him. I wanted him to live and to be in my power. After drinking the water, he roused and crawled back to his bed-place. I went down to bathe.

What a horrid tyrant I was? Every inch as bad as my companion? Exactly—I was so—but I had been made bad by education. From the time I could first remember, I had been cuffed, kicked, abused, and ill-treated. I had never known kindness. Most truly had I asked the question, "Mercy, what is that?" I never heard of it. I had never seen the softer feelings of our nature called into play.

After I had bathed, I again examined the chest and its contents. "I must know what those two books mean," I thought, "and I will know." My thirst for knowledge was certainly most remarkable in a boy of my age. Jackson having invariably refused to enlighten me on any subject, I became most anxious to satisfy the longing which increased with my growth.



CHAPTER V

I HEAR OF MY PARENTS

FOR three days did Jackson lie on his bed. I supplied him with water, but he did not eat anything. He groaned heavily at times and talked much with himself. And I heard him ask forgiveness of God for his sins. On the third day he said to me—

“Henneker, I am very ill. I have a fever from the wound you gave me. I know I have treated you ill and that you must hate me. But the question is, do you wish me to die?”

“No,” I said, “I want you to answer my questions.”

“I will do so,” he said. “My wound is festering, the feathers make it worse. It must be washed and dressed. Will you do this?”

I thought a little, and recollected that he was still in my power, as he could not obtain water. So I fetched the kid of water and untied the cord and took away the feathers which had matted together with the flow of blood. Then I washed the wound carefully.

“What are those little white cords that are cut through?” I said.

"They are the sinews and tendons," replied Jackson. "By them we are enabled to move our hands and fingers. Now they are cut through, I shall not have the use of my hand again."

"Stop a moment," I said, rising up, "I have just thought of something." I ran down to the point where the chest lay, took a shirt from the rock and brought it back with me. Tearing it into strips, I bandaged the wound.

"Where did you get that linen?" said Jackson.

I told him, and that I had got the knife there too.

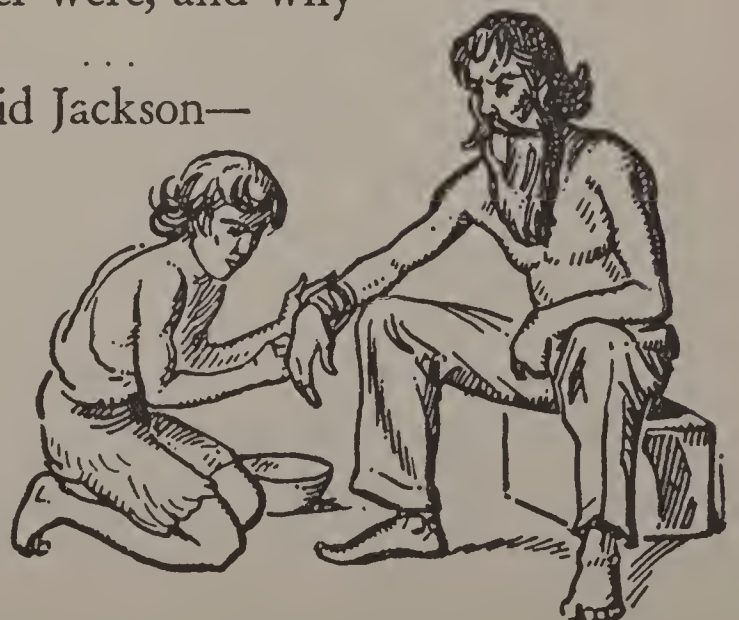
"I feel kindly to you," he said then, "for having bound up my wound. If I had my eyesight and was master again, as I was a week ago, I would not kick nor beat you, but be kind to you."

For two days, while Jackson remained in the grip of his fever, I tended him carefully, washing and dressing his wound. Gradually the hatred I bore to him wore off, and in handling him I was anxious not to give him more pain than necessary. Again it was on the third morning after that he spoke to me and said—

"I am able to talk to you now. What is it you want to know?"

"The whole story of how we came to this island," I cried, "who my father and mother were, and why you hate me and my name."

"Well then, here is the story," said Jackson—



"I was not intended for a sailor. I was taught in a good English school, and when I was ten years old I was put into a house of business as a clerk. This house was connected with the South American trade. Another boy who had come into the counting-house as a clerk but a few months before I came there was your father.

"The owner of this great house of business was Mr. Evelyn. He was very particular with both your father and myself, scanning our work daily, and finding fault when we deserved it. This caused a rivalry between us. On Sunday, Mr. Evelyn used to ask your father and me to spend the day. We went to church in the forenoon and dined with him. He had a daughter a little younger than we were. She was your mother. Both of us, as we grew up, were attentive to her and anxious to be in her good graces. She preferred me to your father, because I was lively and a better companion than he. I think she would have married me if I had conducted myself properly.

"But before I was of age I made some bad acquaintances. The worst was that I acquired the habit of drinking to excess, which I never have since got over, which proved my ruin then and has proved my ruin through life.

"When I was twenty-one years old, I was dismissed by Mr. Evelyn. He had found that I was

living a riotous life and ordered me to leave his service. I tried hard to see Miss Evelyn before I quit the house forever, but she had been sent away to live for a time with relatives in the country.

"So I put what capital I had in the wine trade, bought a share in a brig, and sailed in her myself. After a time I was sufficiently expert to take command of her and might have succeeded, had not my habit of drinking been so confirmed. When at Ceylon, I fell sick and was left behind. The brig was lost and, as I had forgotten to insure my share in her, I was ruined. Thus did I sink down from captain of a vessel to mate, from mate to second mate, until at last I found myself a drunken sailor before the mast.

"After sailing in vessel after vessel, always dismissed at the end of a voyage for drunkenness, I embarked on board a ship bound for Chile. When I had been on that coast for about a year, we were about to proceed home with a cargo when the captain agreed to take on two passengers, a gentleman and his wife, who wished to make the journey to England. Of all people in the world, this couple turned out to be your father and she who was once Miss Evelyn, whom I had once so loved and by my own folly had lost.

"They recognized me and, despite my drunken state, spoke to me most kindly. A foolish pride,

however, bade me tell them I wished to have nothing to do with them.

"We were about to go round Cape Horn, when a gale from the southeast came on which ended in the loss of our vessel. The ship was old, she sprang a leak from straining, at last she became water logged, and we were forced to abandon her in haste during the night. We had no time to take anything with us; we left three men on board who were down below. By the mercy of heaven we ran the boat into the opening that was the only spot where we could have landed. I think I had better stop now, as I have a great deal to tell you yet."

"Do then," I replied. "I will bring up the chest and you shall tell me what all the things in it are good for."

I went down and returned with the clothes and linen. There were eight pairs of trousers, nine shirts—besides the one I had torn up to bandage his wounds with—two pairs of blue trousers and two jackets, four white duck frocks, some shoes and stockings. Jackson felt them one by one and told me what they were, and how worn.

"Let me have a duck frock and a pair of trousers," he said. I handed the articles to him and then went back for the rest which I had left on the rocks. When I returned with arms full, I found he had put the things on. "I feel more like a human being now,"

he said. "Now what have you brought this time?"

"Here," said I, "what is this?"

"This is a roll of duck to make into frocks and trousers," he said. "That is bees' wax." He then explained to me all the tools, sailing needles, fish-hooks and fishing lines, some sheets of writing paper, and two pens that I had brought with me. "All these are very valuable," he said after a pause, "and would have added much to our comfort if I had not been blind."

On my third and last trip I brought up the remaining articles in the chest. It was a heavy load to carry up the rocks, and I was out of breath when I finally set it down on the cabin floor.

"Now what is this?" I asked.

"That is a spy-glass. I am blind, alas, but I will show you how to use it, at all events. Here are two books. By its shape and feel, I am quite sure this one is a Bible and the other is, I think, a prayer book. I will tell you what they are before we go to sleep tonight," said Jackson gravely.

"I shall remind you of that," I replied. "I have found a small box in the chest that is full of all manner of little things—sinews and strings." I put the bundle into his hands to feel.

"These are needles and thread for making and mending clothes," he said. "They will be useful bye and bye."



True to his promise, before we went to bed that night, Jackson explained to me about God and religion. After this talk he seemed cast down and kept muttering to himself for a long while thereafter until he went to sleep.



CHAPTER VI

I LEARN TO READ

I DID not on the following day ask Jackson to continue his narrative about my father and mother. I saw he avoided doing so, and I had already so far changed as to have some thought for his feelings. Another point had taken hold of my mind: I wondered, was it possible to read the books I had found in the chest. This was the first question I put to Jackson when we arose on that morning. He pondered a moment.

"Let me think," he said. "Perhaps there is a way for me to teach you, even though I am blind. You know which book I told you was the prayer book?"

"Oh yes! the small thin one."

"Yes—fetch it here." "Now," he said when I put it into his hand, "tell me; among the letters near the edge of the page here, are some larger than others."

"Yes, some of them are."

"Well then, I will open the book as near as I can guess at the morning service. See if you can find any part of the page which appears to begin with a large round letter, like—what shall I say?—the bottom of a pannikin."

"There is one on this leaf, quite round."

"Very well. Now get me a small piece of stick and make a point to it." I did so, and Jackson swept away a place on the floor of the cabin. "Now," said he, "there are many prayers that begin with a round O, as the letter is called. So I must first find if this is the prayer I want. If it is, I know it by heart, and shall be able to teach you all the letters of the alphabet from this prayer."

"What is an alphabet?"

"That is the whole number of letters which makes us able to read and write. There are twenty-six of them. Now look, Frank: is the next letter to O the shape of this?" And he drew with his pointed stick the letter U on the ground.

"Yes, it is," I replied.

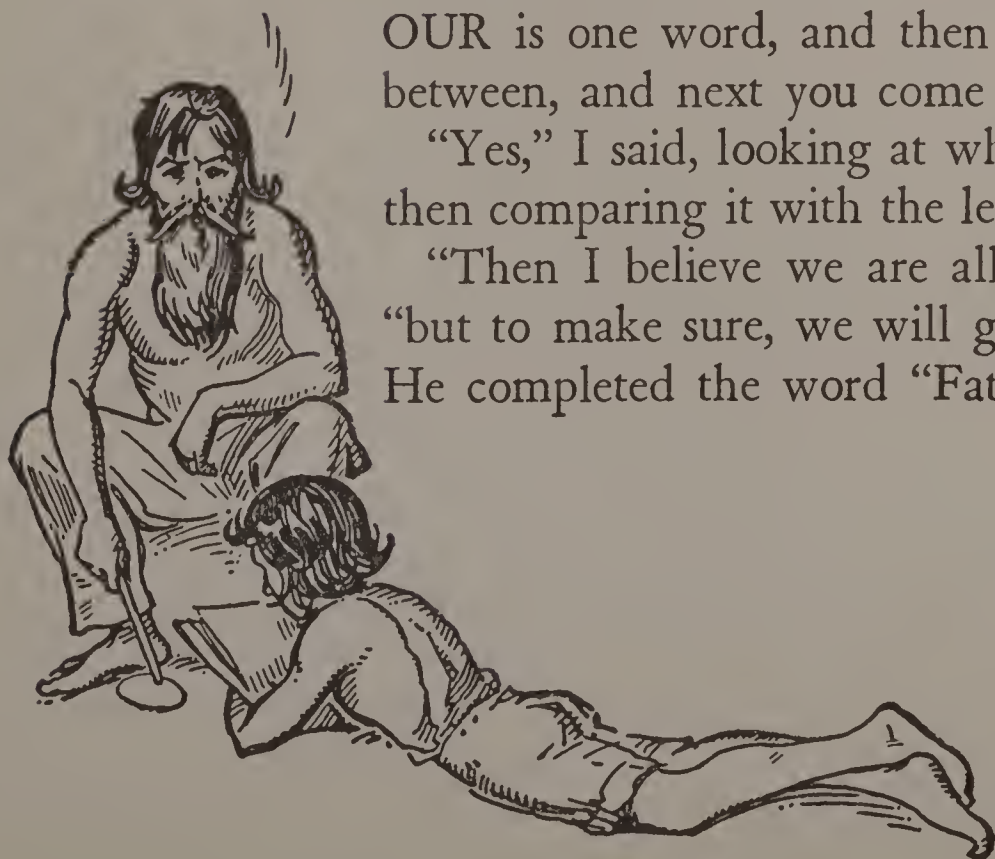
"And the next is like this?" he went on, drawing the letter R after he had smoothed the ground and rubbed out the U.

"Yes, it is," I replied.

"Well then, to make sure, I had better go on. OUR is one word, and then there is a little space between, and next you come to an F?"

"Yes," I said, looking at what he had drawn and then comparing it with the letter in the book.

"Then I believe we are all right," said Jackson, "but to make sure, we will go on a while longer." He completed the word "Father" and "which art"



that followed it, and then he was satisfied that he could make me understand the various letters.

"Now," he said, "out of that prayer I can teach you all the letters, and if you pay attention you will learn to read."

The whole morning was passed in my telling him the different letters, and I soon knew them all. During the day, the Lord's Prayer was gone through, and as I learned the words as well as the letters, I could repeat it before night. I read it over to Jackson twenty or thirty times, spelling every word letter by letter until I was perfect. This was my first lesson.

I had learned so much from Jackson latterly that I could hardly retain what I had learned. I had a confused memory of many things in my brain, and my thoughts kept turning from one subject to another. Slowly, however, things began to unravel and my ideas became more clear. My mind was now occupied with only one wish, which was to learn to read. I thought no more of Jackson's history and the account he might give me of my father and mother, and was as willing as he that it should be put off for a time. Three or four hours in the earlier portion of the day, and the same time in the latter, were devoted to reading my books, and my attention never seemed to tire. In about six weeks I could read without hesitation almost any portion of them. I cannot say I understood many parts which I read,

and the questions I put to Jackson puzzled him not a little. Very often he had to say that he could not answer them.

But the season for the return of the birds arrived, and our stock of provisions was getting low. I was therefore obliged to leave my books and work hard for Jackson and myself. As soon as the young birds were old enough, I set to my task. And now I found how valuable were the knives which I had obtained from the seaman's chest; indeed, in many points I could work much faster. By tying the neck and sleeves of a duck frock, I made a bag that enabled me to carry the birds more easily and in greater quantities at a time. With the knives I could skin and prepare a bird in one quarter of the time. With my fishing lines also I could hang up more to dry at one time, so that even without help I had more birds cured than when Jackson and I were both employed in the work. The whole affair occupied me from morning to evening for more than three weeks, by which time the greater portion of my provision was piled up at the back of the cabin. I did not, however, lose what I had gained in reading, as Jackson would not let me go away in the morning or retire to my bed at night without my reading to him a passage from the Bible. Indeed, he appeared to be uncomfortable if I did not do so.

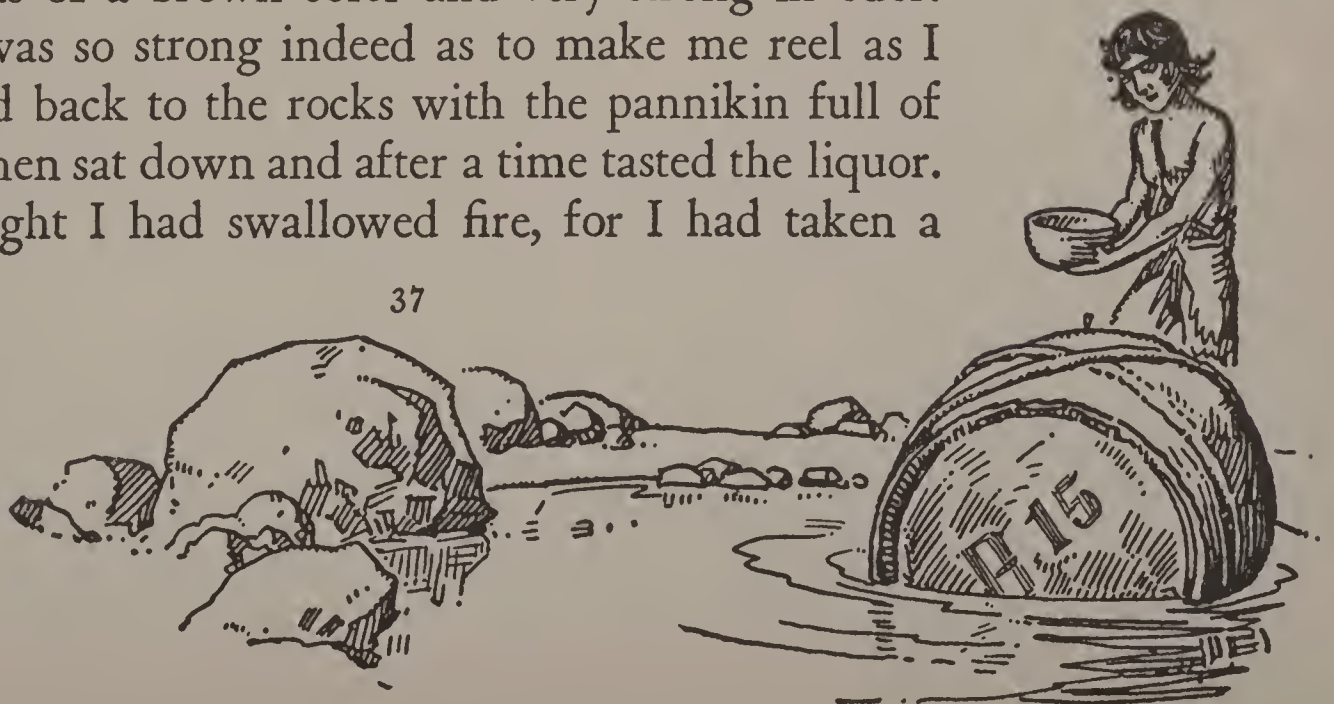
CHAPTER VII

JACKSON SINGS SONGS

ONE day Jackson was telling me anecdotes about a monkey on board the vessel he had sailed in, how the animal was fond of spirits and would intoxicate itself. It suddenly occurred to me that I had never told him of the cask which had been thrown into the bathing pool with the seaman's chest; so I mentioned it then to Jackson, wondering at its contents and how they might be got at.

He entered into the question warmly, explaining to me how and where to bore holes with a gimlet, and making two spiles for me to stop the holes with. As soon as he had done so, curiosity led me to go down to the pool where the cask had been lying so long in about a foot and a half of water.

I soon bored the hole above and below, following Jackson's directions, and the liquor which poured out in a small stream into the pannikin I had with me was of a brown color and very strong in odor. This was so strong indeed as to make me reel as I walked back to the rocks with the pannikin full of it. I then sat down and after a time tasted the liquor. I thought I had swallowed fire, for I had taken a



good mouthful of it. My head began to swim shortly and I lay down on the rock and shut my eyes to recover myself. I fell asleep for many hours, for it was not much after noon when I went to the cask, and it was near sunset when I awoke with an intense pain in my head. When I noted how long I must have slept I arose up and, taking the pannikin in my hand, hastened to return to the cabin.

As I approached, I heard the voice of Jackson whose hearing since his blindness had become peculiarly sharp.

‘Is that you, Frank?’

“Yes,” I replied.

“And what has kept you so long? Oh, how you have frightened me! I thought I was to be left and abandoned to starvation.”

“Why should you have thought that?” I asked.

“Because I thought in some way or other you must have been killed, and then I must have died, of course, without your help.”

It occurred to me that this alarm was all for himself, for he did not say a word about how sorry he should have been at any accident happening to me. I made no remark as to this, however, but simply stated what had occurred and voiced my conviction that the contents of the cask were undrinkable.

“Have you brought any with you?” he asked.

“Yes, here it is,” said I, giving him the pannikin.

He smelt it and raised it to his lips—took about a wine-glassful of it, and then drew a deep breath.

“But this is delightful,” he said; “the best of old rum, I never tasted so good. How big did you say the cask was?”

I described it as well as I could.

“Indeed, then it must be a whole puncheon—that will last a long time.”

“Do you mean to say you really like that stuff?” I asked.

“Yes,” said Jackson. “It’s good for men, but it’s death to little boys. It will kill you. Now promise me you will never drink a drop of it, or some sad accident will happen to you.”

“I had one taste of it,” I answered, “and it nearly burned my mouth out. I shan’t touch it again.”

“See you remember that,” growled Jackson, taking another quantity into his mouth. “Now I’ll go to bed, it’s time for bed. Bring the pannikin after me and put it by my side. Take care you don’t spill any of it.”

Jackson crawled to his bed, and I followed him with the pannikin and put it by his side. At first he was quiet, but I heard him now and then drinking from the pannikin which held, I should say, about three half-pints of liquor. At last he commenced singing a sea song. I was much surprised, as I had never heard him sing before. But I was

also much pleased, for he had a good voice and sang in good tune. As soon as he had finished, I begged him to go on.

"Ah!" he replied, in a gay tone I had never heard him use before. "You like songs, do you, my little chap? Well, I'll give you plenty of them. Here's another for you. I shall rouse them all out by-and-by, as I get the grog in—no fear of that—you find the stuff and I'll find songs."

When I awoke next morning, Jackson was still asleep. I took my morning meal by myself and then walked out to the rock and looked round the horizon to see if anything was in sight. The spy-glass was of no use, from having been in sea water. I returned after about an hour and found Jackson still snoring. I pushed him for some time, to wake him up, but without success. At last, after I shook him as hard as I could, he opened his eyes.

"My watch already?" he asked.

"No," I said, "but you have slept a long time."

He paused as if he did not know my voice, and then said: "But I can't see anything—how's this?"

"Why, don't you know you're blind?" I asked, with amazement.

"Yes, yes, I remember now. Is there anything left in the pannikin?"

"Not a drop," I said, "you have drunk it all."

"Get me some water, then, my good boy."



*I was also much pleased for he had a good voice
and sang in good tune*

I went for the water. He drank the whole pannikin and asked for more.

"Won't you have something to eat?" I said.

"Oh no, I can't eat anything. Give me drink." And he held out his hand for the pannikin. I saw how it trembled and shook and spoke of it to him.

"Yes," he said, "that's always the case after a carouse, and I had a good one last night—the first for many a year. But there's plenty more of it. Did I make much noise last night, Frank?"

"You sang several funny songs," I replied.

"I'm glad you liked them," he said. "Now just go and fetch me about half an inch high of the pannikin, my good fellow."

I went down to the cask, drew off the quantity he wished for and brought it to him. He drank it and in a few moments appeared to be quite himself again. My day passed very agreeably listening to Jackson's stories of former days. As the night closed in, he said:

"Now, Frank, I know you want to hear some more songs. Bring me up a full pannikin and I will sing you plenty."

I did as he asked. Jackson got into his bed-place before he began drinking. And as soon as he had taken his second dose of rum he asked me what songs he had sung last night. I described them as well as I could.

"Ah, they were all sea songs," he said. "But now I'm going to give you something better."

After a little thought he commenced singing a beautiful and sad song, certainly much better than he had sung the night before, for he was now sober. But at last his speech became rapid and thick, and he would not sing any more, cursing me violently when I asked him to. For a time he was silent, and I thought he was going to sleep. Then I heard him talking and muttering.

"Never mind how I got the diamonds," said he. "Quite as honestly as other people, Old Moshes. There they are, if you want to buy them—they're as pure stones as ever came out of a mine. Where did I come by them? that's no concern of yours—will you give me the price, Old Moshes? Well then, I'm off. No, I won't come back, you thieving Jew." Here Jackson swore terribly, and then was silent.

After a while he began again—"Who can ever prove that they were Henneker's diamonds?"

I started up at the mention of my father's name. I rested with my hands on the floor of the cabin, breathless as to what would come next.

"No, no," continued Jackson, "he's dead and food for fishes—dead men tell no tales. And she's dead, and the captain's dead, all dead—yes, all!" And he gave a bitter groan and was silent.

CHAPTER VIII

A PLUNGE DOWN THE CLIFF

WHEN day broke I went out of the cabin and took my usual seat. I began to think over what I had heard. Jackson had talked about diamonds. Now I knew what diamonds were, for I had read of them in the Bible and Jackson had told me such precious stones were of very great value indeed. Then he had said they were Henneker's diamonds—he must have meant my father, so much was sure. And that no one could prove they were his—this meant that Jackson had no right to them.

I recalled his having a secret hiding place under his bed, where I was now certain the diamonds were deposited. I then turned over in my mind what Jackson had told me about the death of my father, the captain, and my mother—one day, right in the midst of a talk we were having on religion. I remembered now how confused he was at that moment, how glad he was to get rid of the subject, and how little trust I put in his account. After much thinking I now made up my mind that Jackson had not told me the truth and that there was a mystery yet to be explained; but how was I to get

at it? There was but one way. The liquor made him talk. Very well, I would supply him with liquor, and by degrees I would get the truth out of him. At the same time I would not allow him to suppose he had said anything to arouse my suspicions. I would remain on the best of terms with him and wait patiently for him to speak.

One night, after he had finished his usual allowance of rum and had composed himself for sleep, I observed that he was restless, changing his position every few minutes. At last he muttered:

"Captain James. Well, what of Captain James?"

A thought suddenly struck me that he might reply to a question.

"How did he die?" said I in a low clear voice.

"Die?" said Jackson; "he fell down the cliff. Yes he did. You can't say I killed him. No—I never put my finger on him."

After that he was silent for some time, and then he began again:

"She always said that I destroyed them both, but I did not—only one—yes, one I grant—but I hated him—no, not for his diamonds—no, no—if you said for his wife indeed—love and hate."

"Then you killed him for love of his wife, and hate of himself?"

"Yes, I did. Who are you to have guessed that? Who are you? I'll have your life."

As Jackson said this, he started up in bed, awakened by his dream and probably by my voice.

"Frank Henneker, did you speak?" he said.

I made no reply, but pretended to be sound asleep.

"It could not have been him," muttered Jackson.

"Mercy, but what a dream!"

He sank down in his bed-place, and I heard him drinking rum. He must have taken a great deal of it, to judge by the time the gurgling lasted. At last all was quiet again.

"So I have discovered it at last," I said softly to myself, as my blood boiled at what I had heard. "He did murder my father. Shall I kill him while he sleeps?" was the first thought that came to my troubled mind. "No, I won't do that. What then, shall I tax him with it when he is awake, and then kill him?" but I thought that as he was blind and unable to defend himself, it would be cowardly, and I could not do that.

A short time before daylight, I started up at what I thought was a faint cry, but I listened and hearing nothing more I again fell asleep. It was broad daylight when I arose. My first thoughts naturally were of Jackson and I looked at where he lay, but he was no longer there—his bed-place was empty. Then I recollected the cry I had heard in the night, and I ran out of the cabin and looked around me, but I could see nothing of him. I then went to the edge

of the flat rock on which the cabin was built and looked over it—it was about thirty feet from this rock to the one below, and the slope between the two was nearly perpendicular.

I thought that Jackson must have gone out in the night, when intoxicated with liquor, and have fallen down the precipice; but I did not see him as I peered over. “He must have gone for water,” thought I, and I ran to the corner of the rock where the precipice was much deeper. And looking over, I saw him lying down below without motion or apparent life. I had, then, judged rightly. I sat down beside the pool of water quite overpowered. Last night I had been planning how I should destroy him, and now he lay before me without my being guilty of the crime. “Vengeance is mine, saith the Lord,” were the first words that escaped my lips; and I remained many minutes in deep thought. At last it occurred to me that he might not yet be dead. I ran down the cliff and, clambering over the rocks, arrived breathless at the spot where Jackson lay. He groaned heavily as I stood by him.

“Jackson,” said I, kneeling down at his side, “are you much hurt?” for all my feelings of hate had vanished when I perceived his unhappy condition. His lips moved but he did not utter any sound. At last he said in a low voice, “Water.”

I hastened back as fast as I could to the cabin, got

a pannikin half full of water and poured a little rum in it. This journey and my return to him took some ten minutes. I put the liquid to his lips and he seemed to revive. He was a dreadful object to look at. The blood from a cut on his head had poured over his face and beard, which were clotted with gore. How to remove him to the cabin I knew not. It would be hardly possible for me to carry him over the broken rocks which I had climbed to arrive at where he lay—and there was no other way but what was longer and just as difficult.

By degrees he appeared to recover. I gave him more of the contents of the pannikin, and at last he could speak, although with great pain and difficulty. As he did so, he put his hand to his side. He was indeed a ghastly object, with his sightless eyeballs, his livid lips, and his face and beard matted with caked blood.

“Do you think you could get to the cabin if I helped you?” I said.

“I shall never get there—let me die where I am,” said he.

“But the cut on your head is not very deep.”

“No, I don’t feel it,” said Jackson, “but my side—I bleed inwardly—I am—broken to pieces.”

I looked at Jackson’s side and saw that it was already black and swollen. I offered him more drink, which he took eagerly, and I then returned for a

further supply. I filled two bottles with water and a small drop of spirits as before, and went back to where he lay. I found him more recovered, and I had hopes that he might still do well, and I told him so.

"No, no," he replied, "I have but a few hours to live—I feel that. Let me die here and die in peace."

He then sank into a sort of stupor, caused, I suppose, by what I had given him to drink, and remained quite quiet but breathing heavily. I sat by him waiting till he should rouse up again.



CHAPTER IX

THE HENNEKER DIAMONDS

WHAT I thought most of, was obtaining from him, now that he was dying, the full truth as to the deaths of my father and mother.

Jackson remained so long in this state of stupor, I feared he would die before I could ask him. But as it proved, this was not to be the case. I waited another hour, very impatiently I must admit, and then I went to him and asked him how he felt. He replied at once and without the difficulty he had before.

"I am better now. The inward bleeding has stopped. But still I can not live—my side is broken in, I do not think there is a rib that is not fractured into pieces, and my spine is injured, for I can not move or feel my legs. But I may live many hours yet, and I thank God for allowing me so much time—short indeed to make amends for so bad a life, but still, nothing is impossible with God."

"Well then," I said, "if you can speak, I wish you would tell me the truth about my father's death, and also about the death of the others. As for my father, I know you murdered him—for you said so last night in your sleep."

"I am glad that I did," replied Jackson, after a pause. "I have already told you the truth up to when the gale of wind came on which occasioned the loss of the ship. Now I'll tell the rest of it.

"The vessel was so tossed by the storm that the between-decks were full of water, and as the hatches were kept down the heat was most oppressive. When it was not my watch I remained below and looked out for another berth to sleep in. Before the cabin bulkheads on the starboard side the captain had fitted up a sort of sail-room to contain the spare sails in case we should require them. It was about eight feet square, and the sails were piled up in it so as to reach within two feet of the deck overhead. Though the lower sails were wet with the water, above they were dry, and I took this berth on the top of the sails as my sleeping place.

"Now the stateroom in which your father and mother slept was on the other side of the cabin bulkhead, and the straining and rolling of the ship had opened the chinks between the planks, so that I could see a great deal of what was done in the stateroom and could hear every word almost that was spoken by your parents. I was not aware of this when I chose this place as my berth, but I found it out on the first night, the light of the candle shining through the chinks into the darkness by which I was surrounded outside.

"Of course it is when a man is alone with his wife that he talks on private subjects, that I knew well. And I hoped by listening to be able to make some discovery. It was not till about a week after I had chosen this berth that I learned anything worth while. I had had the watch from six to eight o'clock and had gone to bed early. About nine o'clock your father came into the stateroom—your mother was already in bed. As your father undressed, your mother said, 'Does not that belt worry you a great deal, my dear?'

" 'No,' replied your father, 'I am used to it now. I shall keep it on as long as this weather lasts. There is no saying what may happen, and it will not do to be looking for the belt at a moment's warning.'

" 'Do you think then that we are in danger?'

" 'No, not particularly so, but the storm is very fierce and the vessel is old and weak. We may have fine weather in a day or two, or we may not. At all events, when property of value is at stake, and property that is not my own, I should feel myself much to blame if I did not take every precaution.'

" 'Well—I wish we were safe home again, my dear, and that my father had his diamonds—but we are in the hands of God.'

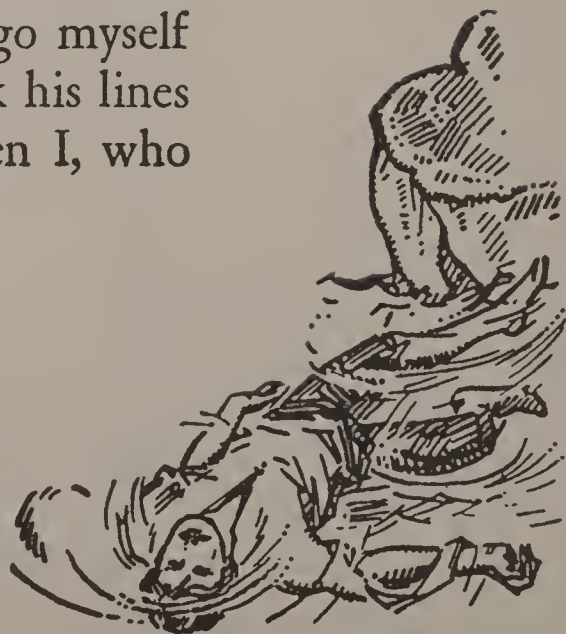
"These words led me to look through one of the chinks of the bulkhead, and I saw your father was unbuckling a belt that ran round his body and which

no doubt contained the diamonds spoken of. It was of soft leather and about eight inches wide, sewed in small squares in which I guessed the precious diamonds were deposited.

"Your father then extinguished the light, and the conversation was not renewed—but I had heard enough. Your father carried a great treasure about his person, wealth that if I once could obtain and return to England would save me from my present position. My greed was hereby excited, and thus another passion equally powerful and equally inciting to evil deeds was added to the hate I already had for your father.

"Within the first three months after we were cast upon this island, three of the brig's crew died—two from eating poisoned berries, the other overtaken by a shark while bathing in the sea. The deaths of so many, and at last the captain, your father and your mother being the only ones left on the island besides myself, once more excited my greed. I thought again of the belt of diamonds and by what means I should gain possession of it. I thought the only chance I had of carrying out my horrible wish was when your father went to fish off the rocks.

"You know where I mean, Frank. I have often sent you to fish there, but I never could go myself since your father's death. Your father took his lines there and was hauling in a large fish when I, who



had concealed myself close to where he stood, watched the opportunity as he looked over the rock to see if the fish was clear of the water, to come behind him and throw him into the sea. He could not swim, I knew, and after waiting a minute or two I looked over and saw his body just as it sank, after his last struggles.

“That was a dreadful day for all parties—no food was taken. The captain and I searched the island over, but of course found not the slightest trace of your father. Finally, your mother and the captain remained in the cabin, and I dared not go in as usual to my own bed-place. I lay all night upon the rocks with all the feelings of Cain upon my brow—sleep I could not. The next morning the captain came out to me. He was very grave and stern, but he could not accuse me, whatever his suspicions might have been. It was a week before I saw your mother again, for I dared not intrude into her presence. But finding there was no accusation against me, I recovered my spirits and returned to the cabin, and things went on as before. . . .

“It was about four months after your father’s death that the captain and I went together to the ravine to collect firewood. We passed under the wall of rock which you know so well and were going through the gap, when the captain left the water-course and walked along the edge of the wall. I

followed him—we both of us had the pieces of rope in our hands with which we tied the faggots. Of a sudden his foot slipped and he rolled to the edge of the rock, but catching hold of a small bush which had fixed its roots there, he saved himself when his body was hanging half over the precipice.

“‘Give me the end of your rope,’ said he to me, perfectly calm although in such danger.

“‘Yes,’ I replied, and I intended to do so, because I saw that if I refused he could still save himself by the bush to which he was clinging.

“But the bush began to loosen and give way, and the captain cried out, ‘Quick, quick, the bush is giving way!’ This determined me not to throw him the rope. I pretended to be in a great hurry to do so, but entangled it about my legs and then appeared occupied in clearing it, when he cried again, ‘Quick!’ And hardly had he said the word when the root of the bush snapped, and down he fell below.

“I heard the crash as he came to the rock beneath. See the judgment of God—am I not now precisely in his position, lying battered and crushed as he was?

“After a time I went down to where he lay and found him breathing his last. He had just strength to say ‘God forgive you,’ and then he died. It was murder, for I could have saved him and would not, and yet he prayed to God to forgive me. How much happier should I have felt if he had not said that.



His cry of 'God forgive you' rang in my ears for months afterwards.

"I returned to the cabin and with a bold air stated to your mother what had happened, for this time I felt I could say I did not do the deed. She burst out into frantic exclamations, accusing me of being not only his murderer but the murderer of her husband. I tried all I could to appease her, but in vain. For many weeks she was in a state of melancholy and despair that made me fear for her life—but she had you still, Frank, to bestow her affection upon, and for your sake she lived.

"I soon made this discovery. She was now wholly in my power, but I was awed by her looks even, for a time. At last I became bolder, and spoke to her of our becoming man and wife. She turned from me in horror. I then used other means. I prevented her from obtaining food—she would have starved with pleasure, but she could not bear to see you suffer, Frank. I will not tell of my cruelty towards her—it is enough to state that she pined away, and about six months after the death of the captain she died, begging me not to harm you, but if ever I had the chance to take you to your grandfather. I could not refuse this plea, made by a woman whom I as certainly killed by slow means as I had your father by a more sudden death.

"After her death, my life was a torture to me for



*She would have starved with pleasure, but she could
not bear to see you suffer*

a long while. I dared not kill you, but I hated you. I had only one consolation—I had possession of the diamonds; one hope—that some day I should again see England. You see me now—are my enemies not all avenged?”

I could not but feel the truth of Jackson’s last sentence. They were indeed avenged.

After a short pause he said to me: “Now, Frank, I feel that the mortification in my side is making great progress, and in a short time I shall be in too great pain to talk with you. I have made a full confession of my crimes—that is all I can do. Now can you forgive me? I shall die very miserable if you do not. Just look at me. Can you hate one in my wretched state? Remember that you pray to be forgiven as you forgive others. Give me your answer.”

“I think—yes, I feel that I can forgive you, Jackson,” I replied. “I shall soon be left alone on this island, and I am sure I should be miserable if I do not forgive you. I do forgive you.”

“You are a good boy, and may God bless you. Is it not nearly daylight?”

“Yes, it is. Shall I read the Bible or the Prayer Book to you? I have them both here.”

“I cannot listen to you now—the pain is too severe. But I shall have moments of quiet before I die, and then—”

Jackson groaned heavily and ceased speaking.

For many hours he suffered much agony which he vented in low groans. The sweat hung on his brow in large beads, and his breathing became labored. The sun marked the noon and had nearly set before Jackson spoke again.

"It is over now," he said faintly. "The pain is less and death is near at hand. Read from the Bible what you think I shall like best—perhaps about the Prodigal Son—I hardly know."

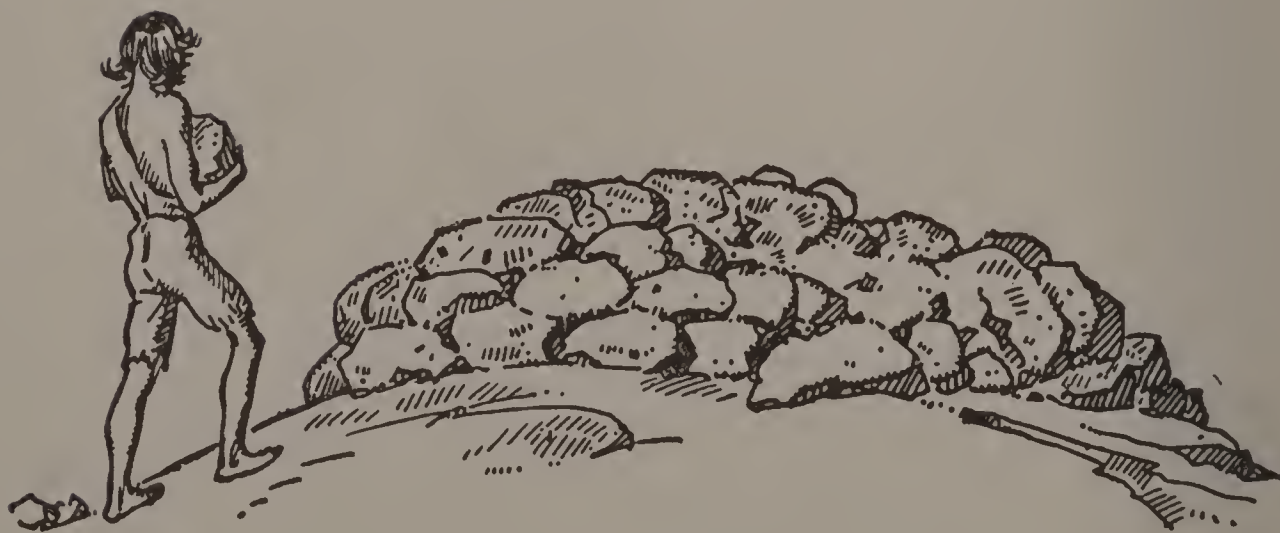
He was then silent as I read the beautiful parable to him. I saw his pale lips move for some time. I turned away for a few moments; when I came back to him, he was no more. His jaw had fallen. And this being the first time that I had ever faced death, I looked upon the corpse with horror and dismay.

After a few minutes I left the body and sat down on a rock at some distance from it, for I was rather afraid to be near to it. On this rock I remained till the sun was sinking below the horizon. Then, alarmed at the idea of being there after it was dark, I took up my books and hastened back to the cabin. I was giddy from excitement and from not having tasted food for many hours.

As soon as I had eaten I lay down in my bed-place, intending to reflect on what I was to do, now that I was alone. But in a few minutes I was fast asleep and did not wake until the sun was high. I arose much refreshed and, seeing my Bible and Prayer

Book close to my bed, I remembered my promise to Jackson that I would read the burial service over his body—so I went with my book to where he lay. His body presented a yet more hideous spectacle than it had the night before. I read the service and closed the book. Then I covered the body with the fragments of rocks which lay about in all directions, a task which occupied me about two hours. Then I left the spot, with a resolution never again to visit it.

I felt quite a relief when I was once more in the cabin. I was alone, it is true, but I was no longer in contact with the dead. I could not collect my thoughts or analyze my feelings during the rest of the day. I sat with my head resting on my hand, in the attitude of one thinking, but my mind was vacant. I once more lay down to sleep, and the following morning found myself invigorated and capable of acting as well as thinking. I had a weight on my spirits which I could not at first account for, but it arose from the feeling that I was now alone, without a soul to speak to or communicate with. My lips must now be closed until I again fell in with some of my fellow creatures—and was that likely?



CHAPTER X

I LEAVE THE ISLAND

I WAS now, by Jackson's account, nearly fourteen years old. During fourteen years but one vessel had been seen by us. It might be fourteen more before I should again fall in with any human beings. As these thoughts saddened me, I felt how much I would have sacrificed if Jackson had remained alive, were it only for his company. I would have forgiven him anything. Even then I felt as if in the murderer of my father I had lost a friend.

That day I was so unsettled I could not do anything. I tried to read but I could not—I tried to eat but my appetite was gone. I sat looking at the ocean as it rolled wave after wave. The evening closed in—it was dark, and I remained seated where I was. At last I returned to my bed broken-hearted.

Another morning was gladdened with a brilliant sun. The dark blue ocean was scarcely ruffled by the breeze that swept over it, and I felt my spirits much revived. After taking a meal, I remembered about the belt with the diamonds. So I went to Jackson's bed-place, turned out the bird-skins and feathers, raked up the gravel which was not more

than two inches deep, and came to the board. This I lifted up, and found underneath a hole about a foot deep and full of various articles without meaning to me. But at the bottom of the hole was the belt I was seeking!"

It was of soft leather, and I could feel a hard substance in it sewed in every square, which I of course presumed to be the diamonds. But I did not cut a single one of the divisions open to see what was in them. On the upper part of the belt in very plain writing were the words, "The property of Mr. J. Evelyn, 33, Minorities, London." My curiosity as to the diamonds having been thus easily satisfied, I replaced them in the hole for a future survey. I covered the hole with the board and put the gravel and the feathers back into the bed-place. Then I again took up my position on the rocks and remained in a state of listless inactivity of body and mind for the rest of the day.

This state of prostration lasted for many days—I may say for weeks. I could find no pleasure in my books; I often took them up, only after a few moments to lay them aside again; I almost loathed the sight of food, I hated the sight of the cabin and of all that was near to it. I quite failed to mark the passage of time—one evil hour was just like any other to me.

Because of this useless repining about my destiny,

in being obliged to live so many years on this far-distant corner of the earth, I had long ceased to look for passing ships. I scarcely ever thought about them any more, and had given up all speculations as to my Grandfather Evelyn's reception of me when and if I should be saved from this living death on an uninhabited island. I rarely went near the sea, except to fish, and never cared to trouble myself about anything outside the limited space which had become my inheritance.

Judge then of my surprise when, one sultry day, as I stood on the flat before the cabin, I saw as in a dream a ship off the island and a boat full of people that had just left her and was headed straight in my direction. I hastily took the spy-glass from the cabin, and as soon as I could get to a convenient position threw myself down on the flat rock and studied through the glass the appearance of the new-comers. It was but a breathless moment before those in the boat found me with their eyes.

* * * *

Well, that ends the story of Jackson and me, and that is what I set out to tell. We made a quick voyage to England. The little savage known as Frank Henneker landed safely in Plymouth and was soon cordially welcomed to his grandfather's house in London.

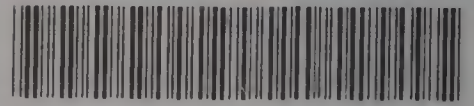
I have only to add that I had the happiness of re-

storing to Grandfather Evelyn the diamonds I had obtained from Jackson. The almost forty thousand pounds Mr. Evelyn derived from their sale must have been most precious to him, for they restored him from the bankrupt condition into which he had nearly fallen to a position of affluence, and made him one of the richest merchants upon Change.



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